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indifference which the Nupe ascribe to divine creation. Yet since the world contains both things, *kuti*, which is good, and *cigbe*, which is both good and evil, the good would seem on balance to preponderate. As we shall see, various other religious thoughts confirm this impression of a cynicism tempered with optimism.

(iv) *Body and Soul*

We turn to the other 'things in the world' and first to the animate beings. Each of these possesses, to begin with, a body, *nakã*. The Nupe word means precisely what we mean by 'body'—the flesh and blood of living creatures, resulting from procreation, parturition, and natural growth, and decomposing after death. The biological processes of procreation and parturition are fairly well understood, though this empirical knowledge is not free from fallacies. Thus no one misunderstands the connection between coitus and conception; one understands, too, that both women and men can be infertile, and that abortion can be brought about by strong laxatives or overstrain. At the same time the Nupe also use certain purely 'magical' cures for barrenness and charms or magic belts to prevent conception. More surprisingly, the Nupe fail to distinguish between semen and male urine, or have to borrow a word from Hausa to describe the former. Nor finally is the precise length of pregnancy known. To quote one of my informants, a diviner and knowledgeable old man: 'It all depends; it may take anything between seven months and a year; a strong and fit child will be born after eleven months or so, a weak one after a shorter period.'

The biological processes as such, one believes, produce only a lifeless body, as death in turn leaves the body lifeless but still physically intact. The living being thus has further attributes, of soul-like nature, which are three in number: *rayi* or 'anima'; *fifingi* or 'shadow soul'; and *kuci* or 'personal soul'.

The word *rayi* is used generally to denote the living state; the pulse, for example, is called *rayigi*, 'little life'. Everything animate possesses *rayi*, while stones, pieces of wood, and similar inanimate objects are without *rayi*; growing trees and plants, however, are counted among the animate things. Life comes from God and exists with God, in the sky, when it is not incarnate. At death 'God takes it away'; at birth it is sent down by God, more precisely, it appears already when the child first moves in the womb. The new life is thus at first tied to the life of the mother, and in a sense remains so tied for a period even after birth. For the mother who has borne one child must not risk another conception before the child can walk and is 'sufficiently strong', lest it would never grow up; so that its *rayi* would seem to be diminished by the other life